

## Stages and New York State Alternate Assessment

### OVERVIEW

Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal benchmark software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

Stages software enhances the New York State Alternate Assessment Process because:

- **Stages correlates with the content of New York Learning Standards.**
- **Stages generates primary evidence for the learner's datafolio.**
- **Stages assists the learner's IEP and/or instructional teams with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

- **Stages correlates with New York Learning Standards.**

A major IDEA '97 goal is to include all students in statewide assessments and general education curriculum regardless of disabilities.<sup>1</sup> Stages content aligns with the Alternate Performance Indicators for Students with Severe Disabilities developed for the Learning Standards by the Education Department.<sup>2</sup> Stages ensures meaningful and effective access to general curriculum areas because the activities are accessible. Please refer to the next section, "How Stages Correlates with New York Alternate Standards," for detailed matching between the informal assessment software and specific academic curricula.

- **Stages generates primary evidence for the learner's datafolio.**

During Stages software activities, the instructor can quickly print directly from any screen to capture a learner-generated product. At the end of each activity, a report with data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The instructional team member may wish to then print that screen or save the information as a text-format electronic file. The file can later be opened in any text program (such as MS Word or SimpleText) or spreadsheet program (such as Excel), and printed for the datafolio as primary evidence<sup>3</sup> focused in a standard learning content area.

Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructor make the most out of an activity session as the data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. Two adults from the instructional team can work together: one adult can encourage the learner and the other can note valuable data about behaviors without being noticed by the learner. Alternatively if a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches.

<sup>1</sup> *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997*. From Findings section 5(A): "Over 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible."

<sup>2</sup> New York State Education Department, et al. p. 3 of Appendix G.

<sup>3</sup> New York State Education Department, et al. p. 33 ("Sources of Primary Evidence").

Over time, the collected data during these regular activities will provide primary evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement. The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills on a regular basis. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid.<sup>4</sup>

- **Stages assists the learner's IEP and/or instructional teams with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's IEP/instructional team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment.<sup>5</sup> Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the variables.

## SUMMARY

Stages augments the New York alternative assessment cycle. The Stages software is a comprehensive tool to assist the instructional team in collecting valuable datafolio evidence, determining assessment strategy, and discovering the learner's abilities and thinking approach.

## REFERENCES

Assistive Technology, Inc. *Stage One* through *Stage Seven* software documentation. Section: "Observing the Learner." 2000. Newton, MA: Assistive Technology, Inc.

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997*. Downloaded March 26, 2002 from URL: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/Policy/IDEA/IDEA.pdf>

New York State Education Department. Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities. New York Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee. Measured Progress, Inc., The Inclusive Large Scale Standards and Assessment Group. Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES. *New York State's Alternate Assessment Teacher's Guide*. 2001. New York.

Pugliese, M. 2002. *Stages*. Second edition. Newton, MA: Assistive Technology, Inc.

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<sup>4</sup> Assistive Technology, Inc.

<sup>5</sup> Pugliese, p. 5.

## How Stages Correlates with New York Learning Standards Alternate Performance Indicators<sup>6</sup>

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### English/Language Arts Standards and Alternate Performance Indicators

#### ***Related Stages Activities***

The instructor, guided by Stages Observation Forms during activities, records learner behavior while Stages software records learner clicks and choices, time spent, correctness and other data for the portfolio.

#### **STANDARD 1: LANGUAGE FOR INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING**

##### Listening and Reading

- ❖ **Students organize and categorize information/materials.**

*Stage Three:*     *Object Identification:* Animals, Toys, Food  
                         *Category Identification:* Animals, Clothing, Vehicles  
                         *Function Identification:* Clothing, Toys, Vehicles  
Stage Three activities extend vocabulary from Stage Two and allow the learner to make choices in response to questions about identification, classification, and functional use of objects. Words are accompanied by symbols and graphics.

##### Listening and Reading

- ❖ **Students attend to the speaker, visually and/or auditorily, or task.**
- ❖ **Students follow directions that involve one or two steps.**
- ❖ **Students use information from [books, magazines, newspapers, textbooks,] audio and media presentations, and from such forms as basic charts, graphs, maps, and diagrams.**

*Stage Five:*     *Reading:* Sounds, Meaning, Context  
                         *Math:* Charts and Graphs, Math Facts, Word Problems, Geometry, Fractions  
                         *Problem Solving:* Mystery Practice  
Stage Five activities give the learner an accessible format to listen/attend to words, stories, directions, and rhymes about different topics. Illustrations, charts, and diagrams provide information to aid the learner in solving problems.

*Stage Six:*     *Stories:* Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan  
Stages provides reading practice by presenting stories with and without audio narration

##### Listening and Reading

- ❖ **Students use functional reading sight vocabulary.**

*Stage Six:*     *Explore and Assess:* Looking at Signs  
Learners explore and identify community signs from common settings in Stage Six.

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<sup>6</sup> Information found in The Learning Standards and Alternate Performance Indicators for Students with Severe Disabilities, by the New York State Education Department (Accessed February 4, 2002). Source: <http://web.nysed.gov/vesid/se/lnrstdi.htm>.

Communicating and Writing

- ❖ **Students use nonverbal communication skills to convey information, needs and wants.**
- ❖ **Students use written form to convey information, needs and wants.**

*All Stages:* The observation forms systematically guide the instructor to make note of the learner's nonverbal behavior and communication during activities.

*Stage Seven: Making Stories*

This activity provides the learner with an alternative means of written expression.

## STANDARD 2: LANGUAGE FOR LITERARY RESPONSE AND EXPRESSION

Listening and Reading

- ❖ **Students listen to a variety of literature: poems; articles and stories from magazines; fables, myths and legends; songs, plays and media productions; and works of fiction and nonfiction.**

*Stage Two: Nouns, Verbs, Attributes*

Stage Two activities engage the learner in attending to and absorbing vocabulary. Stage Two exposes the learner to simple nouns, verbs and attributes (color and size) using short rhyming passages and graphics in photo, drawing, or symbol levels of abstraction.

*Stage Six: Stories:* Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan

Photographs and video clips enhance these short passages about people with and without disabilities.

Listening and Reading

- ❖ **Students participate in reading response activities.**

Communicating and Writing

- ❖ **Students present personal responses to literature that make reference to the plot, characters, ideas and vocabulary.**
- ❖ **Students communicate the meaning of literary works on the literal level.**
- ❖ **Students create their own stories, poems, and songs using the elements of the literature read to them and appropriate vocabulary.**

*Stage Seven: Making Stories*

*Making Stories* is an accessible word-processing activity. The learner can import topic-related pictures as writing prompts and listen to her work using the text-to-speech function.

## STANDARD 3: LANGUAGE FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Listening and Reading

- ❖ **Students form basic opinions about a variety of books, newspapers, magazines, presentations and multimedia.**

Communicating and Writing

- ❖ **Students express opinions about events, books, issues, and experiences.**

*Stage Seven: Making Stories*

Using the accessible keyboard and text-to-speech option in *Making Stories*, the learner can contribute his opinions independently.

## Mathematics

### Standards and Alternate Performance Indicators

#### STANDARD 1: ANALYSIS, INQUIRY, AND DESIGN

##### Mathematical Analysis

- ❖ **Students use mathematics and symbolism to communicate in mathematics.**
- ❖ **Students compare and describe quantities.**

*Stage Four: Math Readiness:* Explore Compare, Estimating  
*Shapes:* Explore and Assess  
*Stage Six: Stories:* Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan  
*Explore:* Money Orientation  
*Assess:* Money ID, Money Equivalents, Counting Money  
 Stage Four provides accessible scenes so the learner can explore and demonstrate mastery of relative quantities and shapes. Stage Six *Counting Money* is closely tied to the *Stories* so that the learner can become familiar with the function of money in the various realistic settings.

##### Mathematical Analysis

- ❖ **Students demonstrate knowledge of mathematical relationships.**
- ❖ **Students relate mathematics to their immediate environment.**

*Stage Four: Explore and Assess:* Shapes  
*Stage Five: Math:* Charts and Graphs, Word Problems, Geometry, Fractions  
*Stage Six: Explore:* Money Orientation, Time Orientation  
*Assess:* Money ID, Money Equivalents, Counting Money, Telling Time  
*Shapes* in Stage Four appear in isolation and in scenes such as a farm or a street corner restaurant. Activities in Stages Five and Six are connected with real-life situations and stories.

#### STANDARD 3: MATHEMATICS

##### Number and Numeration

- ❖ **Students use concrete materials to model numbers and number relationships for whole numbers and simple fractions.**
- ❖ **Students use relate counting to grouping using manipulatives.**
- ❖ **Students recognize the order of whole numbers up to 12 and commonly used simple fractions.**

*Stage Four: Math Readiness:* Number ID, Counting  
*Stage Five: Math:* Charts and Graphs, Word Problems, Geometry, Fractions  
 Stage Four activities provide the learner with number lines and scenes to explore and demonstrate mastery of number identification and relationships between numbers and quantities.

##### Number and Numeration

- ❖ **Students recognize coins and dollars and their value.**

*Stage Six: Explore:* Money Orientation  
*Assess:* Money ID, Money Equivalents, Counting Money  
 The learner explores life-size dollar bills and coins in the *Money Orientation* activity. *Counting Money* connects questions with scenes from Stage Six *Stories*.

## Operations

- ❖ **Students add and subtract whole numbers under 12 using manipulatives or a calculator.**

*Stage Five: Math: Math Facts (+, -), Word Problems (+, -)*

Addition and subtraction activities provide an accessible format. Word Problems include questions with and without visual aids.

## Measurement

- ❖ **Students understand the simple attributes of length, [weight,] volume, time, [and temperature].**
- ❖ **Students measure the length or volume of an object.**

*Stage Five: Math: Geometry*

*Stage Six: Explore and Assess: Telling Time*

Stage Five *Geometry* includes standard and nonstandard units. The *Telling Time* activities in Stage Six include digital and analog clocks and connect with the scenes from the *Stories*.

## Patterns/Functions

- ❖ **Students recognize and duplicate simple patterns**
- ❖ **Students use a variety of manipulative materials and technologies to explore patterns.**

*Stage Four: Math Readiness: Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns*

These activities provide the learner with patterns in shape, color, and sound to explore, create, and complete.

# STANDARD 5: TECHNOLOGY

## Computer Technology

- ❖ **Students use the computer as a tool.**

*All Stages: Stages activities are accessible using various input devices. This will help the instructor and learner work together to determine the most appropriate device(s) for different tasks, and work toward learner independence.*